

HB1605: An Act Concerning Access To Birth Records By Adult Adopted Persons

I am the birthmother you want to protect. I was 18 when I was sent to a maternity home, and gave birth to my daughter in November, 1966. I vowed to never forget her face, and I never did. A few weeks later I signed relinquishment documents and she was taken by Catholic Charities.

I did not sign those papers because I did not love my daughter; I signed them because I did love her. It was made very clear to me that single girls did not make good mothers, and my daughter would be sentenced to a lifetime of scorn because she was "illegitimate".

While I did not feel I had other options, I knowingly signed those papers. I have never seen them. My understanding, though, was that I was giving up ALL RIGHTS to her. I did not know then, nor do I believe now, that I retained any kind of control over her right to get her original birth certificate.

I still love my daughter with my whole heart. I do not want to deprive her or her children of history, medical information and genealogical heritage. I do not want to deprive her of anything....if I did I could have kept her. She did not sign any documents nor did she agree to be treated differently from her peers.

It hurt to lie any time I was asked how many children I had. It hurt especially on her birthday and Mother's Day, but it hurt every day. Living in fear of exposure and unexpressed grief is a lousy way to live. There was so much I did not understand as a teenager. I was told I would just forget my child – that never happened. I did not see that my decision would leave a hole in my grandchildren's heritage, and that society would become tolerant of single motherhood.

When I did summon the courage to tell my family about my secret daughter they welcomed her with open arms and not condemnation. They did not judge me for my teenage indiscretion but for the life I had lived since. They understood that my decision was a symptom of the times, and that my daughter and I were victims of misguided social policy.

I am one of millions who share my story. We know now closed adoptions hurt everyone. Adoption practices have improved, but there are many of us survivors of pre-1983 adoptions who deal with the injustice of sealed records and the stigma of not being good enough. By passing HB 6105, you will give my daughter the document that is her right to have, and let us both know we are now good enough to be treated like everyone else.

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